

Tan Tock Seng's Hospital, Singapore.

BY ARTHUR KNIGHT.

The early history of this valuable institution is briefly given by the inscriptions on tablets still to be seen in front of the new Hospital premises on Moulmein Road, as follows:—

This Hospital
for the
Diseased of all Countries
was built A.D. 1844
at the cost of
Seven Thousand Dollars
wholly defrayed by
Tan Tock Seng.

The wings were added
with large improvements effected
at a cost of
Three Thousand Dollars
wholly defrayed by
Tan Kim Ching
son of the Founder.

This tablet was erected by the
Committee of Management
1854.

The Hospital above referred-to was erected on Pearl's Hill. Mr. Tan Tock Seng was a prosperous merchant here, and had, it was stated, intended to make a sufficient endowment to provide for the maintenance of a given number of patients, but he died in 1850 without having made this arrangement.

In the early years of the Hospital it was mainly maintained by subscriptions, chiefly from Chinese, though Europeans also contributed, and European medical men freely rendered their services.

These Settlements were then politically under the Government of India, and the Military authorities in course of time thought it convenient to take possession of the Pearl's Hill buildings for Military Offices, and the establishment on Seranggong Road was provided in their place.

The tablets above quoted, which, of course, had been attached to the original buildings, were then removed to the front of the new premises, with the addition of another, setting forth—

The
Hospital
was removed from its original
site to the present
buildings in
1860.

Additional accommodation became necessary as patients increased in number; also wards built of materials not permanent had from time to time to be replaced, and the money for these purposes was commonly raised by appeals for subscriptions from members of the Chinese community. Mr. Tan Kim Ching by no means stopped at the liberality which is recorded on the tablet above quoted, and many Chinese gentlemen of means have from time to time freely contributed. In 1879 Mr. Tan Beng Swee, then a member of the Committee of Management,—son of Tan Kim Seng, in whose memory the fountain near the Exchange was built, and father of the Hon'ble Tan Jiak Kim,—built three wards at his own expense, one of which was of permanent materials, accommodating about 30 patients.

In process of time the expense of the Hospital has become so great that it has to be mainly supported by Government grant, but it still has an income derived from interest on invested money, from subscriptions and donations, and rents of property made over to the Hospital, which was incorporated by Ordinance No. VII of 1880.

The Corporation consists of the holders for the time being of certain high offices in the Public Service (the Colonial Secretary being President), of the eldest resident male descendant of the Founder, and of subscribers (generally Chinese) of not less than \$12 per annum and donors of not less than \$1,000. The late Mr. C. B. Buckley was also one of the original members of the Committee of Management.

While it is interesting to note that so far as the institution is and has been indebted to private support it is almost wholly to Chinese, there is one notable exception which should not be passed over—that is the gift of the property now known as Syed Ali's Land, by an Arab merchant, Syed Ali bin Mahomed al Junied. This property abuts on Victoria Street, Queen Street, and Arab Street, and contains an area of over five acres. It was taken by this Arab gentleman in 1857 on a lease from Government for 99 years, and he in the same year assigned it for a nominal consideration to trustees for the benefit of the Hospital. By the Incorporation Ordinance the property is vested in the Hospital, and it has

been leased out in lots at 99 years, yielding a yearly rental now amounting to \$1,231.50.

For some years the question was discussed of removing the Hospital from Seranggong Road to a more favourable site. There had therefore been no building of new wards, except two experimental ones constructed by the Government a few years ago. The Government has now erected entirely new buildings, of a permanent nature, on Moulinein Road. For this new foundation no call has been made upon the general funds of the Corporation, but the Government expenditure was lessened by the generous gift by Towkay Loke Yew of \$50,000, which, having been kept at interest for some time, swelled to \$58,960.24; also by a legacy of \$4,000 from Wee Boon Teck, who was at the time of his death, in 1888, a member of the Committee of Management. This remained on fixed deposit at cumulative interest until last year, when it reached a total of \$9,073.18. This legacy having been made for the construction of a new ward, it was also handed over to Government to be used in the construction of one of the wards in the new buildings, which is inscribed with the testator's name. Similarly, five wards have been named after Towkay Loke Yew and one after Mr. Tan Beng Swee.

On the completion of the new Hospital (vested in the Corporation in exchange for the old property, which was formally surrendered), it was decided, with the sanction of His Excellency the Governor, that it should continue to bear the name of the Founder, Tan Tock Seng, and a new tablet was prepared for the entrance with the following additional historical inscription:—

Tan Tock Seng's Hospital
For the Sick Poor of all Nations
Incorporated by Ordinance VII of 1880, and supported by
Government with the aid of Voluntary
Contributions.

The original Hospital was built in 1844 by Mr. Tan Tock Seng at his own charges and was afterwards enlarged at the expense of his son, Mr. Tan Kim Ching.

It was removed to a new site, in Seranggong Road, by the Government of India in 1860, and additional wards were added in 1879 by Mr. Tan Beng Swee, and at subsequent dates by the Straits Settlements Government.

The present buildings, erected at a cost of \$481,210 (including the cost of site), principally from Government funds, with the aid of a donation of \$50,000 by Mr. Loke Yew and a bequest made by Mr. Wee Boon Teck, were completed in 1909, Sir John Anderson, R.C.M.G., being Governor of the Straits Settlements.

Then attention was drawn to the large number of Chinese inmates—nearly 40—who were incurably blind, most of whom were otherwise in good health, but who were occupying space which should be available for the sick. It was therefore desirable that a separate ward should be prepared for the blind, and this want was met by the munificent gift of \$12,000 from Mr. ONG KIM WEE, of Malacca. The new ward was, by the sanction of His Excellency the Governor, erected on a site adjoining the new buildings, and named after the generous donor, his gift to be recorded by a suitable tablet.